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A W Barnett to H A Hall, June 1896

Steam Barge *Flinders*

Thursday 1896

Dear Aub, (not of the universe)

We have reached Exmouth Gulf & are at anchor repairing machinery.

I don't think you are agent for a first class company, old fellow & fancy the company have the honor of calling you their agent not vice versa.

In the saloon every thing is as pleasant as could be desired, but on deck there is much that is undesirable. Grease, coal dust & dirt have pretty much their own fling. We steamed at funeral pace last night (probably on a/c of the death of several sheep) certainly on account of the engine. After several stoppages the Captain has run in here & the devils in the engine room are clattering away at repairs.

At the Ashburton we [--] were boarded by some of the natives of the place, amongst them MacHenry & Lou Donoghue (not Dun-no-who) & two old sea-dogs who swore they had been first & second mates under Noah in the Ark some time ago. We got them over the side to our great relief after observing several of their savage rites such as drinking firewater etc. Don't think we threw them over into the water, a boat received them & they departed chanting a native song. They said they had come out from a *port* & had a fine township. We tried to look as if we believed them, but the sandhills & general unattractiveness of the place belied their boast.

Some of us thought of going on shore for a while but after the visit of these inhabitants it was decided to defer the pleasure.

The cap you were so kind as to give me is a source of pride & concern to me. As an instance of pride I am masting the stewardess in it (& other garments beside of course — not the cap only) said stewardess being old enough to be my grandmother — still she may not have learnt the art of [?ovasuction]? As an instance of the concern it caused me I noticed the

cold-water pipe in the hands of a man this morning & as he was looking at my head, why I retired from motives of a purely suspicious nature. But it is a warm article (in comfort as well as colour) & very acceptable. And the screw — it is awful. We are all suffering from palsy when in motion & there the brute goes again — here endeth this veracious epistle for the present.

[?Sunday]

While I think of it I may mention that between my last night on shore & yesterday morning I was relieved of £6. Being a fiver & a sov. Hard times & I can't say for certain whether I lost it on shore or on board. Believe it was on board, but think it wiser to let the matter drop. The number of the note is I think either 2/4 15844 or 2/4 2898 Union Bank.

It's no use making a fuss when one is not *quite* certain. It's gone out of my purse any way & I have not spent it. One £5 note & a sovereign.

June 2nd

We arrived much to our surprise & pleasure at Geraldton on the Anniversary of the Colony June 1st. We expected from our average speed down the coast to arrive late in the year. The weather down was all that could be desired. Beside the jetty were the *Cintra* & the *Konowarra* two fine large steamers. The *Saladin* & the *Tagliaferre* we passed on our way down.

The jetty of the present day is away to the E or N E of the jetty of 7 years ago. I was disappointed in not seeing my old Dad but put up at the Club Hotel kept by Chipper (late Hoskens) while down at the jetty seeing to my luggage I met a Mr A S Scott who recognized me by my resemblance to the 'old block' & took much trouble to be of service & entertainment to me. The same day I met Dr E & Charlie Conway & that is about the limit of my acquaintance at present. I have had hospitable offers made me by Conway & Dr E but I am trying to wait quietly until my fathers arrival tonight to see how my prospects are. Anyway they have got me as a non member of the Club willy nilly.

Tonight Scott & I are going out to Walkaway 9.30 pm to meet the train from Perth & before I close this I may be able to tell you what my employment at Yalgoo is likely to be.

Your coat with many thanks I am returning to George Snook in a small case with a parcel for Mrs [?Zeddi].

Geraldton has made enormous advancement since I saw the place 7 years ago. The town being built on a beach between a ridge of sand hummocks & the sea, has no possible chance of gaining in breadth so the one main street is fairly imposing. The railway station & yards cover a big expanse of ground & a bustling busy scene it is all day [--] the train runs to & fro from the jetty with the big 6 ton trucks.

Yalgoo

June 8, 1896

Today I have put in my first days work as assis Registrar (salary £180 per ann) I have received a very cordial welcome from those I am thrown amongst & so far so good.

Yal'goo a long way, my friend, before you find a more uncomfortable, rougher place than this. I came here to find no lodging available & the rain pouring down in torrents. Now, I have got a tent erected & a bed to sleep on etc. Perhaps it will be a little better when the railway enters the township (save the mark) which it will do shortly.

There's a fair sprinkling of 'the weaker vessels' here some married & some eligible. A dance took place to the strains of a concertina the night I got here at which the local [?slaveys] disported themselves.

The last night I was in Geraldton I spent a most enjoyable evening at Mrs Du Boulay's with my father & Dr Elliot. There were three young ladies there and they played and sang & Mrs Du B sang & so did Mr Du B & your humble friend three times with much pressing being as you know so confounded shy. But oh the girls! how shall I tell you so gentle, so courteous, so womanly, so lady-like what a change after the average Roebourne & Cossack variety. Truly I spent the most *thoroughly* enjoyable evening for 9 long years. Dr E my father & Mr Du Boulay sang

'For we'll rant & we'll roar' you know 'farewell & adieu to ye fair Spanish ladies'.

A daughter of Mr Maitland Brown was the youngest lady present & she sang twice in a very pleasing voice.

I have made some really good friends in Champion Bay & look forward with pleasure to my next trip there.

But you see in finding new friends I don't forget the old ones. I am always thinking of you, old fellow, ever my friend who comes next dearest to my father. Give my very kind regards to Ernest & all my friends in Cossack & don't forget to tell Wilson to look me up if he goes down South. It will only cost him about £8 in fares return from Geraldton to Yalgoo. Poor old Harry had a bad trip in from the steamer the night we sailed. We saw him becalmed under Jarman Island at dusk.

Well ta, ta & heaven prosper all you handle old man & think of me sometimes.

Yr sincere friend
A W Barnett

H Aubrey Hall Esqre